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The Cost of Rest

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The Cost of Rest

My unknown question I pose about our post-pandemic future is “What will the future of being sick look like?” I pose this as currently, in the United States, being sick often doesn’t mean much, unless it heavily restricts you from daily activities. Work and school typically encourage attending even if sick, and even punish you for being sick – lack of sick hours & strict attendance from professors come to mind – and in a post-Covid, where prevention of transmission is key, how would this change? Would schools and professors allow online attendance as a substitute, or become more lax on attendance to allow for students to take the time needed to recover, isolated, safely? Would businesses and workplaces provide adequate sick leave for their employees, without the need for a doctor’s note and without fear of losing their income?

In addition, would businesses become more strict upon their customers, with temperature taking to make sure no one with a fever was entering the establishment? Would institutions continue to maintain the high level of cleanliness that is currently occurring during the pandemic, such as spacing and enhanced, more frequent cleanings?

My suspected answer to this question is, unfortunately, probably not. The addition of extra sick leave to employees is a costly decision, and I could only potentially see it happen in limited amounts to essential workers, in order to prevent unneeded transmission. As for school, much of this is up to individual districts, teachers, professors, and employee unions; on a district level, I could see at-home sick study becoming more common, in line with what we are currently doing. For professors, who often set their own guidelines, I believe those who had been touched by Covid would be the first to support lax attendance rules, but there is always an exception. I don’t believe all professors will become lax, or even a majority, and potentially, like districts, they may opt for virtual learning in lieu of total sick leave.

I also don’t believe businesses would turn down customers were they to have a fever, but I could see the upkeep of heightened cleanliness once we, as a society, have recognized just how filthy

some everyday things truly are. After seeing the cleanliness standards we are currently enjoying, that are helping limit both Covid and the flu, it is difficult to return to the idea of not having those. However, the cleanliness is an added cost for businesses, and could simply be discarded on that merit alone.

While I feel, realistically, being sick in a post-Covid future will be no different than a pre-Covid time, I do hope and look forward to the idea that things may change. That, maybe, we can learn how to better take care of each other in our times of weakness, even through the smallest action of simply allowing a break.